



JACK DOYLE

MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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MONROE COUNTY LAUNCHES CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN

Monroe County Executive Jack Doyle, joining with the United Way of Greater Rochester, today launched a major new initiative called "Do Right By Kids," designed to encourage community responsibility for the safety of young children and to decrease the number of children devastated by severe child abuse and neglect.

"Protecting the children of our community should be the responsibility of everyone," said Doyle. "Mistreating even one child, is one too many. It's up to all of us in the county to do right by kids."

Do Right By Kids will be developed in three phases through 2003. Doyle, and United Way President Joseph Calabrese, today unveiled a mass media campaign targeted at reducing the incidence of Shaken Baby Syndrome – one of the leading types of "inflicted injuries" among infants.

"Shaken Baby Syndrome is important because those effected by it are often killed or have life-long disabilities," said Calabrese. "We need to do better by these children by educating parents and caregivers about the risks."

The three components of "Do Right By Kids" are:

- Shaken Baby Syndrome, a mass media project being released today;
- Mandated Reporters Training, an interactive new-media approach to training of teachers, day care workers, police and others required by law to report child abuse scheduled for release early in 2002;
- Positive Parenting, a mass media and community intervention campaign to improve parenting skills, model effective parenting behaviors and emphasize the value of children to the community.

A series of TV commercials to raise awareness and teach the dangers of shaking a baby will be the first part of the campaign, scheduled to begin airing in prime time this evening.

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The media campaign will be complemented by posters and brochures to educate caregivers about the dangers of shaking a baby and advise ways to care for and calm a crying baby. They will be distributed to pediatricians, family practitioners and obstetricians.

All three phases of the Child Abuse Prevention Program are based on research, commissioned by the county and the United Way, by the University of Rochester, Department of Community and Preventive Medicine.

The Mandated Reporters segment is under development and encompasses improving the currently existing reporter training. Through the research, the county found a dire need to improve the relationship between Child Protective Services (CPS) unit of the Department of Social Services and mandated reporters. CPS investigates reports of child abuse.

Monroe County has more than 30,000 mandated reporters, defined as professionals required by New York State Social Services Law to report incidences of suspected child abuse. Examples of mandated reporters are: teachers, day care workers, law enforcement, medical providers, mental health providers and some community agency personnel.

“Generally the current mandated reporter training is a one-size-fits-all approach,” said Dr. Andrew S. Doniger, Director of Monroe County’s Health Department. “There is a definite need for a different training curriculum for teachers and day care workers versus police officers.”

The research also identified a key concern among mandated reporters who call CPS when they detect abuse – they rarely know the outcome of the report. A new curriculum will provide a better feedback loop between CPS and mandated reporters, to the extent possible by law.

“This new curriculum is being created to teach people how to be better reporters so we can be better responders,” said Diane Larter, Deputy Director of the Monroe County Department of Social Services. “We hope to reduce over-reporting and increase under-reporting of suspected child abuse cases.”

The final component of the “Do Right By Kids” campaign is Positive Parenting and is due to launch sometime in the second year of the campaign. This component entails the difficult aspects of disciplining children in a positive manner. The target audience is any adult who provides primary care for children; parents, single parents, foster parents and guardians, neighborhood friends, day care providers and more.

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